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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993

Revised estimates under section 24, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; section 21D, Crime prevention and criminal justice; and section 27, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Eighth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the reports of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates under section 24, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (A/C.5/47/29), section 21D, Crime prevention and criminal justice (A/C.5/47/40), and section 27, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) (A/C.5/47/41), of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993. During its consideration of the above reports, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information.

A. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

2. The Secretary-General recalls in paragraph 2 of his report (A/C.5/47/29) that the changing circumstances and priorities of the region and, in particular, the process of transition of several centrally planned economies in the region to a market economy, have presented ESCAP with new responsibilities and reaffirmed the need to strengthen regional cooperation. The Committee notes that the Commission, on the recommendation of a Group of Eminent Persons, adopted resolution 48/2 on restructuring the conference structure of the Commission, which was approved by the Economic and Social Council in decision 1992/290 and resulted in revisions to programme 31 of the medium-term plan for 1992-1997 (paras. 4 and 5). The Committee further notes

that the Committee for Programme and Coordination, at its thirty-second session, recommended to the General Assembly the approval of the revisions to programme 31, with the modifications as stated in its report (A/47/16 (Part I), para. 87), which will provide the framework for the programme budget for 1994-1995 (para. 6).

3. The Secretary-General estimates the additional requirements for outside expertise not available in ESCAP for activities related to countries that are in transition to a market economy as well as to the response to Agenda 21 1/ and to the problems faced by the least developed, land-locked and island developing countries in the amount of $40,000 (para. 17). Upon inquiry, the Committee was informed that the expenditure for consultancy as at October 1992 amounted to $78,500 against an appropriation in 1992 of $149,000.

4. The additional requirements for travel to conduct fact-finding missions and consultations with Governments are estimated at $55,000 (para. 18). Upon inquiry, the Committee was informed that the expenditure for travel as at October 1992 amounted to $256,700 against an appropriation of $274,100 for 1992. With regard to the above expenditures for consultants and travel during 1992, the Committee was informed that the reorientation of activities from a sectoral to a thematic approach had begun and a number of anticipated consultancies and missions had been postponed to 1993.

5. The representatives of the Secretary-General stated that it would not be possible to redeploy resources from within section 24 of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 to finance the proposed activities estimated at $95,000 (para. 21). Considering that the restructuring of ESCAP is in process and it is difficult to project any overexpenditure under section 24 at the present time and taking into account the low implementation level under consultancy as well as the extrabudgetary resources available to ESCAP ($37.2 million) for the biennium 1992-1993, the Committee sees no need for the General Assembly to authorize an additional appropriation of $95,000 at the present time. The Advisory Committee therefore recommends that, at the present stage, the Fifth Committee take note of the above estimate on the understanding that such additional appropriations as may be necessary should be indicated by the Secretary-General in his first performance report under section 24 of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993.

B. Crime prevention and criminal justice

6. The Secretary-General recalls in paragraph 1 of his report (A/C.5/47/40) that the General Assembly, in its resolution 46/152 of 18 December 1991, took note of the report of the Ministerial Meeting on the Creation of an Effective United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme (see A/46/703 and Corr.1) and approved the statement of principles and programme of action annexed to its resolution.

7. The General Assembly, in its resolution 46/152, paragraph 7, requested the Secretary-General to take the necessary action within the overall existing United Nations resources and to provide appropriate resources for the effective functioning of the programme of action in accordance with the principles outlined in the statement of principles and programme of action.

8. With regard to the proposed creation of an effective crime prevention and criminal justice programme (section B), the Committee notes that the Committee for Programme and Coordination, at the first part of its thirty-second session, has recommended to the General Assembly the approval of the revisions to programme 29, with the modifications as stated in its report (A/47/16 (Part I), para. 70).

9. The Committee notes from paragraph 12 of the Secretary-General's report that the upgrading of the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch into a division, as recommended by the General Assembly in resolution 46/152, annex, para. 32, to be headed by a director at the D-2 level, would be given further consideration in the context of the ongoing review of the economic and social sectors (para. 12). However, the Secretary-General states in paragraph 12 of his report that some strengthening of the staff resources of the Branch appears necessary in 1993.

10. The Secretary-General estimates that three additional posts (two P-4 and one P-3) would be required to carry out the new tasks of the crime prevention and criminal justice programme, especially in the areas of technical cooperation and expanded operational activities, development of coordinated training programmes and development, maintenance and operation of additional databases (para. 13). Furthermore, the Secretary-General estimates additional requirements for outside expertise ($30,000), travel for fact-finding missions and consultations ($15,000) and computer equipment and software ($20,000) (paras. 14-16).

11. Upon inquiry, the Committee was informed that the Secretary-General would redeploy the required additional two P-4 and one P-3 posts (see para. 10 above), on a temporary basis, from section 33, Administration and management, of the programme budget for 1992-1993 where vacant posts have been identified for redeployment in 1993. The Advisory Committee trusts that any such proposed redeployment for 1993 will be submitted to it for approval in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules. In paragraph 23 of his report, the Secretary-General states that "the preparation of the programme budget for the next biennium will provide an opportunity for the Secretary-General to review thoroughly the overall post requirements in the crime prevention and criminal justice programme".

12. The Committee further notes that the Secretary-General proposes to absorb the additional requirements for consultancy, travel and computer equipment totalling $65,000 (see para. 10 above) from within the overall appropriations under section 21 of the programme budget for 1992-1993 (para. 24). In that connection, the Committee was informed that the Secretary-General intended to reassess the situation and requirements of the crime prevention and criminal justice programme in January 1993.

13. As regards the preparation for the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (section C), the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1992/24, requested the Secretary-General to provide the necessary resources to undertake, in an effective and timely manner, within the overall appropriations of the programme budget for 1992-1993 and adequate resources for 1994-1995, the preparatory activities for the Ninth Congress (para. 17). The Secretary-General estimates that general temporary assistance equivalent to one additional P-4 and one General Service (other level) posts would be required, starting in 1993 (para. 19).

14. The Committee notes that it is the intention of the Secretary-General to utilize the savings in staff resources, equivalent to one P-4 and one General Service post under section 21D, following the reorientation of the crime prevention and criminal justice programme, for the preparatory activities of the Ninth Congress in 1993 (para. 20). Additional costs for travel of representatives of the regional commissions are estimated at $25,000 (para. 21); that amount will be absorbed from within sections 23 to 26 of the programme budget for 1992-1993. Public information activities in 1993 are also expected to be financed from within existing resources (para. 22).

15. The Committee has no objection to the Secretary-General's proposals to finance the additional requirements for the expansion of the crime prevention and criminal justice programme under section 21D, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/152 and Economic and Social Council resolutions 1992/22 and 1992/24, from within the overall appropriations of sections 21, 23 to 26 and 33 of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 (see paras. 11-14 above).

C. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

16. The Secretary-General recalls in paragraph 2 of his report (A/C.5/47/41) that the proposed budget of ESCWA has been prepared at the maintenance level and is based on Baghdad costs. The Commission, at its sixteenth session, held at Amman from 30 August to 3 September 1992, approved, in resolution 195 (XVI), the programme of work of its secretariat for the biennium 1992-1993, as amended in the light of observations made thereon by the Technical Committee; those amendments, as presented, do not have any programme budget implications (para. 3).

17. The Secretary-General states in his report that "it is not possible to determine at the present stage whether the headquarters of the Commission will be transferred to a new location in the course of the current biennium" (para. 5). The Committee notes that, at the same time, lower operating costs at the current location, Amman, particularly with regard to salaries and common staff costs, have generated substantial savings.

18. The Secretary-General proposes to reflect the projected savings of $5.6 million for the biennium 1992-1993 in the first performance report and to maintain the appropriation approved by the General Assembly under section 27 ($50,381,500) at the present time, taking into account the projected additional commitments in relation to late charges for costs incurred at

Baghdad and the possibility of a relocation of ESCWA headquarters towards the end of the current biennium (para. 5).

19. The Advisory Committee has no objection to the above proposals.

Notes

1/ See A/CONF.151/26, vols. I-III.